

I believe that relaxing the already too lax rules regarding media consolidation would result in a significant erosion of American democracy. Already the effect of the less stringent policies adopted in the last decade has diminished the quantity and quality of political information easily available to the general public. By this I mean the number of differing viewpoints on any given topic in a given geographical region. For example, in my area alone, six of the eleven for profit radio stations are owned by a single company. This means that a single person, or a small Board of Directors, has direct control of a significant amount of all information easily available to the listening public. If he, she, or they do not want the public to hear about something, or conversely, want the public to only hear one thing, then all they have to do is make it company policy and the flow of information is shunted. It then becomes necessary for people to actively seek out alternative sources of information. Many do not have time for such activities. It's hard enough for most of us to keep up with work and family.

A couple of perfect examples occurred within the past month or so, as Clear Channel Communications apparently instructed the Program Directors of their extensive collection of radio stations to remove music from their playlists that was seen as anti-war, in addition to banning music by artists who had spoken out against the American intervention in Iraq. At the same time the Program Directors were told to put certain songs into heavy rotation, (that is, played often) that are considered patriotic and pro-American. The fact that each of the above examples were even instituted as corporate policy alone is unsettling; taken together they chillingly add up to pure propaganda. I understand that private media corporations can say pretty much whatever they like and are under no obligation to be objective. This is precisely the problem. If a company like Clear Channel also controlled newspapers and/or television, as well as radio, in a given area, there would be a distinct lack of viewpoints other than their own, in effect creating a totalitarian-esque propaganda machine in said region. The original broadcast rules were created specifically to prevent this kind of situation. The people who created them understood this and worked to prevent what has already begun thanks to changes in the regulations in the last decade. Please do not allow it continue.

Already we in America are sorely lacking a multitude of perspectives. There is the perception that non-mainstream equals fringe, and fringe is extreme and therefore bad, even though in any given instance this may not be the case. Democracy equals Diversity. Without a wide variety of perspectives and many sources of

information easily available to each and every citizen, America will surely devolve into a myopic quagmire of political ideology, with the quality of life at home, and abroad, right on its heels. I urge you, the FCC, to not relax broadcast ownership rules. Do your part to keep America free.